

# Recommendations from Council Subcommittee on Engagement and a Welcoming Council Environment

City Council Meeting

May 11, 2021

# Purpose

- Respond to community and council feedback about public participation during City Council meetings
- Share proposed changes to City Council meeting protocols
- Seek input from council on several items

# Community Feedback

- Positive feedback for efforts to enhance community engagement
- Support for increased frequency of Chats with Council
- Support for separating Public Hearings and council votes for major issues
- Barriers for community members speaking to council

# Improvement Categories

- Improvements to Open Comment and Public Hearings
- Procedures related to sharing of community presentations
- Improvements related to interpretation and meeting formats
- Improvements related to council correspondence
- Envisioning a future with hybrid meetings

# Potential Changes

# Improvements to Open Comment and Public Hearings

Potential Change	Request of Council	Subcomm. Support?	Considerations/ Implications
Restructure Open Comment to include more options for two-way dialogue. Reduce frequency of Open Comment during council meetings (to one per month) and increase frequency of Chats with Council that allow for more back-and-forth (to one per month).	Council input requested	Yes	To implement, council members would need to commit to 2-3 Chats with Council per year. Two council members would participate in each two-hour Chat with Council session and locations would rotate throughout the city. Times/days of the week may vary and Saturday mornings seem to work well for community members.

Potential Change	Request of Council	Subcomm. Support?	Considerations/ Implications
Limits on Open Comment frequency for people who have already commented recently when things are tight	Council input desired	No Consensus	The potential for more frequent Chats with Council (see proposal below) may lessen the need to explore limits on Open Comment frequency. But depending on the popularity of the chats, limits may be necessary for these too.



Potential Change	Request of Council	Subcomm. Support?	Considerations/ Implications
Waiting list for two or three people for Open Comment if speakers drop out after roster is created	No input requested	No	With currently minimal no-shows to Open Comment, this change would create a burden on staff, who have limited bandwidth to communicate with additional community members during Open Comment.

Potential Change	Request of Council	Subcomm. Support?	Considerations/ Implications
Implementation of productive atmospheres script with new slides	Council input requested	Did not discuss	Staff has refined the proposed script discussed at the retreat; seeking council approval to begin using at May 18 council meeting

# Procedures related to Sharing of Community Presentations

## Immediate Staff Actions

Watermark or scroll added by city staff to designate community member slides during Open Comment or Public Hearing when broadcast on Ch. 8

## Timeline and progress

This is possible within livestream and Channel 8 broadcasts; would need to test within Zoom

Potential Change	Request of Council	Subcomm. Support?	Considerations/ Implications
Allow community member presentations (slides) shown during Open Comment or Public Hearing to be available for broadcasting on Ch. 8/livestream	Council input requested	Yes	CAO has serious concerns about this item and does not want staff reviewing slide content for obscenity. If council approves this recommendation, CAO recommends no staff review of slide content and that slides are not broadcast on Ch 8.

# Improvement related to Interpretation and Meeting Formats

Immediate Staff Actions	Timeline and progress
<p>Revise council speaker sign-up to include Spanish text and to ask interpretation need</p>	<p>Staff is planning to translate council speaker sign-up webpage into Spanish, including option to indicate need for Spanish and other languages, by the end of May 2021.</p>
<p>Potential for simulcast live in Spanish</p>	<p>This is possible but would require investment in new equipment and ongoing staff resources for what is currently a low audience count</p>

Potential Change	Request of Council	Subcomm. Support?	Considerations/ Implications
Council motions not be scheduled under Matters (except if unanticipated and urgent). Rather, all motions to be voted on scheduled under either the Consent Agenda or as a Public Hearing for another date.	Council input requested	Yes	Recommended by subcommittee and supported by Council Agenda Committee.



Potential Change	Request of Council	Subcomm. Support?	Considerations/ Implications
Separate public hearings from decisions for major matters, where community participation is expected to be significant, as determined by the Council Agenda Committee. There still will be decisions made on the same night as public hearings for most (non-major) matters.	Council input requested	Yes	Council would then have time to absorb community feedback, reflect, send back to staff, then make decision at a subsequent meeting as soon as practical (scheduled by CAC). This could minimize the number of decisions being made late in the evening.

Potential Change	Request of Council	Subcomm. Support?	Considerations/Implications
Clarifying timing and priorities for interpreting council meetings	Council input requested	Yes	Subcommittee recommends continuing to provide interpretation for major issues (e.g., COVID-19 updates) or where staff identifies increased interest from Spanish-speaking community members (e.g., East Boulder Subcommunity Planning). CAC may decide to schedule Public Hearing with interpretation ahead of other Public Hearings.

Potential Change	Request of Council	Subcommittee Support?	Considerations/Implications
Agenda timing changes (e.g., interpreted items or community members presenting items moved to earlier in the evening)	No input requested	No	Subcommittee recommends continuing to keep agenda item categorized and scheduled as is. If interpreted items are anticipated later in the meeting, staff will provide time estimates to interpreters.

# Improvements related to Council Correspondence

## Immediate Staff Actions

## Timeline and progress

Creating directory of ideal staff members to respond to frequently asked questions within council email, lessening need for council to reach out to directors to identify appropriate staff

Staff is currently refining this directory and will distribute to council members by the end of May 2021. Council members using this list will be asked to also cc directors when sending a request to a subject matter expert staff member.

Reinforcing importance of timely staff response with a cc to council when requested by a council member and/or when there is a question or a perspective that appears to be based on misinformation

Staff has shared this request with the interim city manager and will underscore importance with all directors at upcoming Staff Agenda Meeting

Continuing process improvement and resource allocation discussions around responding to council emails.

The city has hired a project manager to scope a new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. This system will replace Inquire Boulder and will support better council email responses. Timeline for exploration is second half of 2021 and into 2022.

Potential Change	Request of Council	Subcomm. Support?	Considerations/ Implications
Staff to respond to all council emails within 24 hours (except weekends) and notify CC which ones staff is covering	Council input requested	Yes with strong objections from staff	Staff proposes addressing timeliness of responding to community member questions using current standard of three business days; providing catalog of frequently arising issues and appropriate staff contacts; and collaborating with project manager to revamp the city's CRM (customer relationship management) tool to better track correspondence. Opinion-based emails would not necessitate staff response.

# Envisioning a Future with Hybrid Meetings

Immediate Staff Actions	Timeline and progress
<p>Preparing for potential of hybrid council meetings</p>	<p>Staff is planning for a transition to hybrid council meetings. Transition will include a focus on technological, facility, and engagement aspects. Preparations should be complete by the time council returns from summer 2021 break.</p>



Potential Change	Request of Council	Subcomm. Support?	Considerations/ Implications
Definite transition to hybrid council and special council meetings	Council input requested, especially around safety and timing	Yes	One of the good things to come out of COVID was the ability for those community members who could not otherwise engage in person on Tuesday nights to be heard. The subcommittee doesn't want to lose that. So, we should accommodate remote (Zoom) participation for Open Comment and Public Hearings, in addition to in-person speakers. Staff will need to work out the details of how we create a hybrid environment that allows voices heard remotely to be heard equitably with voices heard in person. There will be resource implications to manage a hybrid system, specifically the need for a Zoom host in addition to the regular in-person staffing necessary for meetings.

Potential Change	Request of Council	Subcomm. Support?	Considerations/ Implications
Start by keeping all study sessions remote; when the pandemic risk dissipates and resources are at a level to support a hybrid approach, evaluate if a move to hybrid makes sense. If the meetings are hybrid, allow some council members and staff to participate remotely, with others participating in person.	Council input requested	Yes	The subcommittee would like to allow some council members (and staff members, if desired) to participate remotely in study sessions. This will permit those traveling on business or for pleasure to not miss sessions. And, if anyone is feeling under the weather, they can still participate without the risk of infecting others. There should be some limits on how often this happens, so that we don't have council members dialing in to every study session and so that we don't have staff members sitting in chambers addressing only computer screens. So, as a starting point: (a) A council member may Zoom into up to four study sessions per year (signed up in advance); and (b) no more than three council members may participate by Zoom at any given study session, so that there are at least five or six council members in the room, in person. The study session meeting facilitator (rotated through council members) should always be an in-person participant. We're not married to those numbers, but that's the general concept. Exceptions would be made for council members who need to go to Zoom on short notice due to genuine illness. This is likely to require Charter and/or rule changes; current procedures are covered by an emergency order.

## Boards & Commissions Staff Recommendation

Aligning with city staff hybrid return to office, boards and commissions should remain virtual until Sept. 7.

From Sept. 7 until the end of 2021, each board and commission may choose whether to hold meetings in-person OR virtual (with advice that those that wish to provide live viewing options stay virtual).

The city will not evaluate whether we can provide support for hybrid board and commission meetings until the start of 2022.

# Questions & Discussion